



## The "Straight and Narrow" Way Pt 1: Coming to Terms with the Term! :)

Exploring the Kingdom of God through Matthew

June 3, 2018

### HOLY TEXT:

- *Mat 7:13-14 (KJV) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*
- *Mat 7:13-14 (ESV) "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*

Today, our task is to begin to embrace all the LORD is saying to citizens of the Kingdom in a very culturally frowned-upon text. In fact, although our LORD has been teaching "straight and narrow" precepts throughout the Sermon on the Mount, here He makes it clear: **NARROW** is the way which leadeth unto life and **FEW** find.

### THE STRAIT AND NARROW WAY...A FEW THOUGHTS

1. Everything about this text tends to rub carnally-minded people the wrong way.
2. Why? Because of religious syncretism, or mixing the sacred with the secular, is one of the enemy's most successful plan.
3. Take for example, the image of the "strait gate." (v13) This suggests that the Way is **closed** off and shut to all but those who enter in at the designated point (Christ!).
4. Is there anything more hateful to the modern mind than to declare that there is only ONE WAY? *Joh 14:6 (KJV) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* Is there anything more narrow than that?
5. I say again, one of the challenges of the Christian walk and witness is the exclusivity of Christ. Our LORD makes NO provision in this text of other ways or gospels. Even the words Jesus uses frustrates the **antinomian** reader (one who rejects the idea of any laws or precepts)...
  - The word for "strait" in the KJV in Greek is *stenos*. It means "narrow, not crooked; rigorous."
  - Narrow is from the Greek *thlibo* - and it means "to press (like grapes), press hard upon, a compressed way, narrow straitened, contracted; metaphorically to trouble, afflict, distress."
  - "Literally, pressed or hemmed in between walls or rocks, like the pathway in a mountain gorge." -PHC
6. Christ teaches very clearly that the "wide gate" or the "broad (wide or spacious) way" will be the one that "many" enter.
7. That truth that many will enter presupposes a mass desire to do so. This is the way of the world: inclusive, antinomian...no law, no sin," accepting of all views/Universalism.
8. Heartbreakingly, this is the path of **death**..."*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" *Pro 16:25 (KJV)*
9. Those who would follow Christ MUST be willing to walk through the strait gate and embrace the narrow, less-traveled, but **glorious** road.

## NARROW...COMING TO TERMS WITH THE TERM!

Synonyms for narrow				
<i>adj</i> confined, restricted				
cramped	thin	contracted	scanty	tapering
definite	tight	exclusive	select	determinate
limited	attenuated	fine	set	exiguous
precarious	circumscribed	fixed	shrunk	incapacious
precise	close	near	spare	linear
slender	compressed	pent	strait	meager
slim	confining	pinched	taper	paltry
small	constricted	scant	tapered	threadlike

1. Let's look at some common synonyms for "narrow" to understand our reluctance:
2. No good words here from our perspective! The idea of being "limited," "confined," or "constricted" clashes against our modern sensibilities. We've been taught from birth to "believe in yourself" and that we can "be all we want to be." Essentially, we've deified our "personhood" and feel **entitled** to almost anything we want. Our feelings are our gods and desires our foremost prayers.
3. Yet again and again, our LORD and His apostles call for the opposite and warn us as well (see Matt 16:24, 10:38-39; Php 3:7-8; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 4:1).

### Friends, **NARROWNESS** has always been the way of God's people

Despite common aversion to our LORD's terminology, be it known that God's people have always been called to a *straight and narrow* way of life. Other terms are used throughout Scripture to illustrate and command the point: "separate," "special possession," "peculiar people," etc: Gen 3:15; 1 Jn 3:7-10; 1 Kings 8:51-53; Ex 19:5-6; Lev 18:24-25; Deut 7:6-8, 18:9; Mal 3:16-18; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1.

Paul wrote to Titus these "narrow" words:

*Tit 2:11-14 (KJV) For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (See also 1 Pet 2:9)*

James said...

*Jas 4:4 (KJV) Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

### AN IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION

1. Our LORD's teaching that the Way is Narrow doesn't mitigate against **GRACE**!

2. Remember from Titus 2:11-12 above, it is GRACE that both opens the strait gate AND teaches (trains) us to walk *The Way*!
3. Yes, friends, it is God's love, mercy, and grace that enables us to "find" the gate to start with, "enter in," and live according to God's Holy Word.
4. The *Straight and Narrow Way* is all about God's love towards His people, calling them out of darkness and into His marvelous light.
5. Only God can open our eyes to the "broad way" upon which we were blissfully and obliviously traveling. Only God can show us the eternal destruction of that path. Only God can call us to the strait gate. Only God can change our hearts to want to walk through such a gate in the first place.

*Eph 2:5-8 (KJV) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

Amen!

#### APPLICATIONS FOR EDIFICATION (BUILDING UP) AND ENCOURAGEMENT

(ROM 14:19; EPH 4:9; 1 THES 5:11; JUDE 1:20)

1. To repent and believe in Christ is to enter through the *strait and narrow gate*. Our lives should match such a confession. Do you live on the narrow way? Discuss.
2. "Narrow" doesn't mean our lives should lack JOY! Discuss why "narrow" and "joyful" DO NOT contradict each other.
3. The reality that "few" will "find" *The Way* can be difficult to accept. Although it can motivate us, this truth, if improperly applied, can make us either ambivalent or arrogant. How are you guarding against such?